

# Local librarians react to Seuss Enterprises dropping certain books

## Perspective shared on Dr. Seuss' legacy

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**OCONOMOWOC** — Dr. Seuss Enterprises announced this week they will voluntarily stop publishing six Dr. Seuss books due to racist and insensitive imagery, but local librarians weren't caught off guard by the decision.

"Initially, when I heard that news, I was not very surprised," said Muskego Children's Librarian Abby Bussen. "This has actually been years and years in the making. Read Across America did start to distance themselves from Dr. Seuss back in 2017."

Oconomowoc Youth Services Librarian Caitlin Schaffer felt the same. "For those in (the) world of children's literature this has been kind of a discussion for some time now," she said. "So many of his books are so beloved, if not these titles."

Both librarians emphasized their thoughts were their own professional opinions, and they were not speaking on behalf of their respective libraries or cities.

The books no longer being produced include "And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street," "If I Ran the Zoo," "McElligot's Pool," "On Beyond Zebra!," "Scrambled Eggs Super!," and "The Cat's Quizzer."

"These books portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong," Dr. Seuss Enterprises told The Associated Press in a statement that



A series of Dr. Seuss books on a shelf in Waukesha.

Katherine Beck/Freeman Staff

coincided with the late author and illustrator's birthday. "Ceasing sales of these books is only part of our commitment and our broader plan to ensure Dr. Seuss Enterprises' catalog represents and supports all communities and families."

Books by Dr. Seuss — born Theodor Seuss Geisel in Springfield, Massachusetts, on March 2, 1904 — have been translated into dozens of languages as well as in Braille and are sold in more than 100 countries. He died in 1991.

He remains popular, earning an estimated \$33 million before taxes in 2020, up from just \$9.5 million five years ago, the company said. Forbes listed him No. 2 on its highest-paid dead celebrities of 2020, behind only the late pop star Michael Jackson.

Some of Seuss' work contin-

ues to be admired, with the consensus being the message in those books are positive. Schaffer said "Horton Hears a Who!" was a way for Seuss to apologize to a Japanese friend of his for some of his past depictions. Others include messages of treating others fairly.

In a way, Dr. Seuss Enterprises is continuing that self-critical analysis he set about doing himself towards the end of his life, Schaffer said.

Some of Seuss' work will continue to have a place in both libraries and children's literature as a whole.

"No one is saying Dr. Seuss didn't make wonderful contributions to children's literature," Bussen said. "We just don't have to hold up every single one of his books as paragons to children's literature ... I enjoy reading 'Fox in



Some of the best-known Dr. Seuss books on a table in Waukesha.

## SOUND OFF

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Sox, who doesn't?"

In 2021, there are dozens of children's authors with their own works to contribute as well. Schaffer said among that "wealth of other fantastic phenomenal books" are works by authors Jason Reynolds, Grace Lin, Jacqueline Woodson, Yuyi Morales and Walter Dean Myers.

Bussen said Christian Robinson is also an author with notable works in children's literature.

"I don't think Dr. Seuss is going anywhere quickly," Shaffer said.

Contributing: The Associated Press